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NSC BRIEFING

6 Dec 1955

THE FRENCH ELECTIONS

- I. Party prospects in 2 Jan. elections still unclear, since voting system being used puts premium on party alliances and these yet to be announced.
- II. In 2 Jan. '56 election for French National Assembly 1951 single-ballot electoral law will be used.
 - A. This provides for party lists in 95 electoral districts and permits parties to "affiliate" (i.e., to have their votes counted as a unit)
 - B. Any single-party slate or "affiliated" slate that obtains a majority gets all the seats for that Department.
 1. In the absence of a majority, the seats are allotted by proportional representation.
 2. In the 8 districts comprising the Paris region, no affiliation permitted.
 - C. Since it is virtually impossible for any one party to obtain an absolute majority, electoral "affiliating" will be resorted to.
 - D. In 1951, affiliations were possible in 95 districts:
 1. There were no affiliations in 12
 2. In the other 83 districts, 90 affiliations took place, involving Socialists, Popular Republicans, Radicals and Independents-Peasant bloc.

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3. The Communists had no affiliations
 4. In only one district did a single list win a majority
 5. 38 affiliated lists won a majority
 6. 56 contests were decided by proportional representation.
- E. Alliances expected to be much less extensive in '56 elections.
- F. Although the '51 law was originally designed to minimize Communist and Gaullist representation, it is now expected to help the Communists, because of anticipated local PCF "affiliations" with Socialists, as well as because proportional representation favors the PCF.
- G. 28 parties already reported entering candidates on "national" basis (i.e., in more than 30 districts):
1. This number includes representatives of Poujade anti-tax movement
 2. Also anticipates split in Radical Socialists en lines of Mendes-France feud against Faure.

III. Too early to make any predictions on the outcome of ^Tan elections.

- A. "Affiliations" are less clear, at this point, than in 1951. They will be made largely on local issues:
1. Socialist National Council meeting 6 Dec. to determine scope of "affiliations" will have important bearing on all alliances.

- B. The Communists are expected to form some "affiliations" with the Socialists
- C. The Independents are expected to make the greatest gains, largely at the expense of the Gaullists. They will ally mostly with the Popular Republicans and the Radicals, despite Mendes-France's desires to limit Radical "affiliations" largely to the Socialists.
- D. There is little likelihood of Communist participation in the government formed following the election.